

Washington, DC -- At the request of U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica), representatives from the Finger Lakes National Forest, the Towns of Lodi and Covert, and the offices of Assemblyman Brian Kolb, Senator Hilary Clinton and Senator Charles Schumer joined Arcuri in the Town of Lodi today discuss local concerns regarding land acquisition in Seneca County by the U.S. Forest Service for the Finger Lakes National Forest

“This meeting was a critical first step to ensure that in any decision affecting local landowners and taxpayers, the community and elected representatives have adequate information and input into the process,” said Arcuri, who hosted a meeting regarding land acquisition in the Finger Lakes National Forest. “Today we began an inclusive process, based on full communication between all parties, wherein community concerns regarding land acquisition will be addressed to the fullest extent possible. I want to thank the Forest Service, local officials and the offices of Assemblyman Kolb and Senators Clinton and Schumer for their willingness to come together and give local residents a better opportunity to play an active role as these issues move forward.”

Arcuri organized this meeting with Forest Service officials in response concerns raised by the towns and Seneca County pertaining to the Forest Service’s management and land acquisition procedures and future funding of town and county services on federal lands. This meeting was intended to clarify the role that local communities can play in future forest planning and to foster cooperation and communication between the local communities and the Forest Service. The participants agreed to future meetings to ensure open lines of communication.

In May, Arcuri sent a letter requesting today’s meeting with the Forest Service.

A copy of the letter Arcuri sent to the U.S. Forest Service is included below:

May 13, 2008

The Honorable Abigail Kimbell, Chief
United States Forest Service

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Sidney R. Yates Federal Building
201 14th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Chief Kimbell:

I am writing today on behalf of my constituents in Seneca County, NY who have raised concerns over acquisition and management of lands within the county that are part of the Finger Lakes National Forest. These concerns include: the impact that continued acquisition of parcels by the Forest Service have on the local tax base; management of recently acquired parcels, specifically related to agricultural uses of certain tracts; and plans for further expansion of the forest.

It is my understanding that similar concerns were raised in the past, and that the Forest Service maintained that acquisition decisions are made in consultation with the Town of Lodi, NY. Unfortunately, based on current concerns brought to my attention by New York State Assemblyman Brian Kolb (see letter attached), it does not appear that the town or county officials feel that they have an adequate voice in those decisions.

For purposes of facilitating a better public understanding of the Forest Service's management and land acquisition plans, I request a meeting be held in Seneca County, between local and state elected officials, myself, and an appropriate representative of the U.S. Forest Service, as soon as possible. I would be happy to host such a meeting and coordinate a mutually agreeable time for all parties.

Please have your staff contact Mr. Chris Wilcox in my Washington office at 202-225-3665 or Chris.Wilcox@mail.house.gov

for meeting coordination or additional information. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL A. ARCURI
Member of Congress

Cc: New York State Assemblyman Brian Kolb
Mr. Lee Davidson, Supervisor, Town of Lodi, NY
Mr. Roy Ike, Seneca County Agricultural Enhancement Board
U.S. Forest Service Congressional Liaison

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